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## The Story Behind Trump's Gag Order Involves a Man Under Criminal Investigation for Stalking (Exclusive)

A Wisconsin man behind the digital campaign that prompted Donald Trump's gag order received three 50-year restraining orders and two

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Former President Donald Trump in New York and mugshot of Brock Fredin. Timothy A. Clary/AFP/Getty Images; Mugshot of Brock Fredin

**T**he saga of former President Donald Trump's first gag order began with a social media post by an account called "JudicialProtest."

"Why is Judge Engoron's Principal Law Clerk, Allison R. Greenfield, palling around with Chuck Schumer?" @JudicialProtest wrote on Sept. 27, 2023, showing the clerk and the Senate Majority Leader posing for a picture.

The post tagged the former president's sons Eric Trump and Donald Trump Jr. — who are also co-defendants in the case — along with social media influencers on the political right.



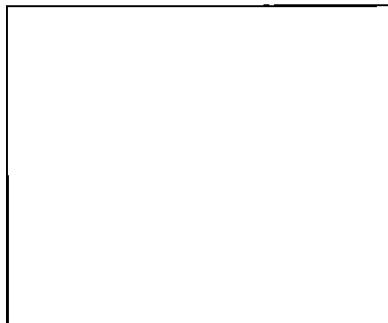
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On Oct. 3, 2023, the second day of his civil fraud trial, Trump attached a screenshot of that post to his own social media website Truth Social, with a message falsely labeling Greenfield the "girlfriend" of Schumer. Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Arthur Engoron ordered Trump to delete the "untrue" and "disparaging" post, leading to an unprecedented gag order against a former U.S. president. It remains unclear how Trump learned about @JudicialProtest's social media account or why he decided to share it with an audience of millions. As of Wednesday, the @JudicialProtest account was followed by Trump's campaign spokesman Jason Miller, who attended the former president's civil fraud trial.

An investigation by the Messenger has found that 40-year-old Wisconsin resident Brock Fredin — the man behind the @JudicialProtest account on X, the website formerly known as Twitter — has a prolific history of civil and criminal litigation over his harassment of women that echoes his attacks on Greenfield. Fredin has been hit with 50-year restraining orders barring him from contacting three women, and he has been criminally convicted multiple times for violating two of those orders. He is currently under criminal investigation for more suspected restraining order violations and possible stalking.



A month and a half later, Trump's sharing of @JudicialProtest's post snowballed into

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more than a month of litigation, fines of \$15,000 for violating those rulings, and an ongoing appellate battle to determine the fault lines of what the former president can say about the judge's staff. Those orders remain under appeal, in what Trump's lawyers describe as a First Amendment battle about the GOP frontrunner's ability to criticize the judge's principal law clerk.

So far, a New York appellate court has rejected those arguments, reinstating the gag orders, which narrowly protect the judge's staff. Trump remains free to criticize the judge and New York Attorney General Letitia James, who brought the case that could shut down his New York business empire. Trump's attorneys have cited the @JudicialProtest account in appellate court records, without providing any information about the account's owner.

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New York State Supreme Court Justice Arthur Engoron is seen with his law clerk Allison Greenfield in the courtroom before the start of the third day of the civil fraud trial of former US President Donald Trump, in New York on Oct. 4, 2023. MARY ALTAFFER/POOL/AFP via Getty Images

The Messenger found no evidence that Trump's attorneys or surrogates communicated with Fredin or coordinated his attacks on the judge's clerk while the gag orders were in place. But the investigation found that Trump's attorneys and

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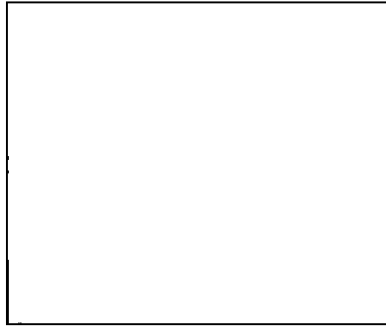
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surrogates repeatedly cited or boosted Fredin's online content.

Neither Trump's campaign nor Fredin responded to requests for comment on this article.



## **The 'Unsettling' Backstory of the @JudicialProtest Account**

Since all three women who have come forward against Fredin are court-adjudicated victims of harassment, The Messenger is not publishing their names. Their attorney declined to comment for this article.

Two of the women met Fredin on dating websites in 2014 and 2015, and then called things off after receiving messages described by one Minnesota court as "unsettling."

The third had been an assistant city attorney for Minneapolis when she operated a Twitter account on women's issues and gender violence. On Jan. 24, 2017, this account posted Fredin's photographs, asking followers to boost his image to "keep women safe."

Roughly a month later, on Feb. 22, 2017, the same Twitter account reported that another woman had stepped forward to accuse Fredin of rape. Fredin has never been charged with that crime, and he unsuccessfully sued the operator of the Twitter account for repeating the alleged survivor's accusation. A federal judge threw out the defamation lawsuit, noting that the fact that Fredin was never prosecuted "does not necessarily render the allegation false."



Minnesota court records show that juries convicted Fredin for violating restraining orders at least twice, leading him to spend roughly eight months in jail from October 2018 to June 2019. Fredin's separate stalking conviction was overturned on appeal, following a change in Minnesota law.

But Fredin's not out of legal hot water, yet.

## **The @JudicialProtest User Touts Trump's 'Endorsement'**

On Oct. 13, 2023, a little more than a week after Trump's gag order, local police in Hudson, Wisconsin, arrested Fredin on suspicion of 130 counts of violating a restraining order and stalking, according to his arrest record. Fredin spent less than a day in St. Croix County Jail, and there is still an active criminal investigation into the allegations, police confirmed to The Messenger.

Fredin seems to feel aggrieved by the justice system, given the names of his YouTube accounts like @JudicialProtest. Other similarly-named YouTube pages, like @JudicialGrift, @JudicialTyranny, and @JudicialDissent share videos attacking people connected to his cases, including attorneys, judges, and law enforcement, but the owner of the account cannot be confirmed.

In 2020, Fredin's penchant for filing at least a dozen retaliatory lawsuits — in state and federal jurisdictions in Wisconsin and Minnesota — led then-U.S. District Judge Susan Richard Nelson to declare him a “malicious and vexatious litigant,” a designation requiring him to seek court approval before suing in her district. Fredin also unsuccessfully sued the now-defunct Twin Cities-based news outlet City Pages for reporting on his harassment in a profile titled “Accused stalker Brock Fredin is writing a horror story, and he's the main character.”

Now, Fredin seems to feel validated by Trump's attention. On Oct. 31, 2023, Fredin told an appellate court that Trump's post amounted to an “endorsement” of his view that two of his victims should be prosecuted and jailed.

“Petitioner wanted to emphasize that these sentiments have already received endorsement from President Trump, who expressed support for them on October 3, 2023,” Fredin wrote in his brief, which asked Minnesota's Supreme Court to reverse his convictions.

Former President Donald Trump speaks to members of the media after testifying at his civil fraud trial at New York State Supreme Court on Nov. 6, 2023 in New York City. Michael M. Santiago/Getty Images

The brief included a screenshot of Trump's Truth Social post boosting him. A decision on that high court appeal remains pending.

## Echoes of the Attacks on the Judge's Clerk

For the three women who won harassment restraining orders, Fredin's attacks on them appear to mirror his actions toward Greenfield, the clerk assisting the judge in Trump's case. He has attacked the targeted women in their professional circles, created harassing websites about them, and filed formal complaints against them, according to court filings.

In one case, Fredin tagged a woman's law school in a social media post describing her as a "likely criminal" and registered a website in her name, a court found.

"In addition, Fredin sent numerous emails or other electronic communications to persons associated with [the woman's] online activities or employment, each time sharing identifying information about her, her employer, and her anonymous Twitter account, accusing her of criminal conduct, and soliciting others to make complaints about her," Nelson wrote in a ruling some three years ago.

Fredin filed a bar complaint against one woman to Minnesota's Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility, which found it did not warrant any investigation. Another woman alleged in court documents that Fredin filed a baseless Title IX complaint to Pennsylvania State University, her then-graduate school.

This pattern continues with Trump's trial: Fredin filed a bar complaint against Greenfield, which was disseminated on Breitbart, a website co-founded by Trump's ex-strategist Steve Bannon. The complaint was dated on Oct. 3, 2023, the same day that Trump was first gagged. In the complaint filed under his name, Fredin identified himself as the owner of the @JudicialProtest account.

Fredin emailed the letter to Engoron's chambers, copying the missive to four state agencies and disciplinary committees: the Attorney Grievance Committee, Commission on Judicial Conduct, Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government, and New York Office of Court Administration.

Some three years before targeting Greenfield, Fredin openly threatened other courtroom clerks whose judges ruled in favor of one of his victims.

"Remember, each clerk is going to get reported to the Professional Responsibility Board and websites are going up exposing you for your failure to protect," Fredin wrote in an appellate brief from September 2020.

In a 30-page appellate brief, Fredin told court staff they would suffer a “Billy Goat curse” or “curse of the Bambino” for “the next three hundred (300) years” for their handling of the case.

## **‘Dozens’ of ‘Vicious’ and ‘Inflammatory’ Websites**

All three women protected by the restraining orders accused Fredin in court documents of building websites to humiliate them. Court records show that Fredin built websites in the names of two of the women — and that the third said that Fredin “authored and posted a website” about the law firm representing her, which linked to her graduate school profile.

In an order, a federal judge found Fredin created “dozens” of “inflammatory, baseless, demeaning, and disturbing” websites and videos. The order forced Fredin to take down 25 of the “vicious” websites and videos identified by name — and any others he created targeting the women, their attorneys, or the court.

In the middle of Trump’s civil fraud case, Fredin’s bar complaint against the judge’s clerk was disseminated on a website also built in her name.

Domain registration records show a URL in the name of Engoron’s clerk was created on Oct. 4, 2023, the day after Trump’s gag order was imposed. The website refers to the clerk as a “Democratic Operative and Hack” and splashes her photographs throughout the page, inviting visitors to call disciplinary authorities asking her to be “disbarred.” A similar website in the judge’s name was registered that same day. Fredin has shared the domains from both websites on social media, and both contain the complaint that he filed against Greenfield. Registration records disguise the identities of both websites’ owners.

The total number of websites created by Fredin against his perceived antagonists remains unknown.

## **Trump Barred from Using ‘Employees or Agents’ to ‘Evade’ Gag Order**

Justice Engoron made clear that Trump and his attorneys cannot “evade” his gag orders through “employees or agents.” The judge also emphasized that the penalties for any violations by Trump or his attorneys could be severe, including heavy fines and possible imprisonment. Trump’s spokesman did not respond to questions about whether the former president’s campaign or officials have communicated with Fredin, who did not respond to requests for comment.

Fredin’s public statements show that he believes that Trump endorsed his sentiments. Trump’s attorneys and surrogates have never commented on Fredin’s credibility, and there is no evidence any of the former president’s representatives looked into his background.

On Nov. 3, 2023, Trump’s lead attorney Christopher Kise cited a story on Breitbart reporting that Fredin filed a bar complaint against Greenfield.

“So as I understand it this morning, there is a new story out about particular political



partisan contributions that have been made by certain members of your staff; that there was a complaint made," Kise told the judge last month, later specifying that it was the just-published Breitbart story.

**Lawyer Christopher Kise looks on as former US President Donald Trump attends the third day of his civil fraud trial in New York on October 4, 2023.** JEENAH MOON/POOL/AFP via Getty Images

Later that day, Engoron expanded the gag order to include Trump's lawyers, but Trump's lawyers navigated around the order by receiving permission to attack the clerk again in a motion for a mistrial.

Adopting the same argument as the Breitbart article — which cited Fredin as its primary source — Trump's attorneys claimed that Greenfield made excessive campaign donations in violation of state ethics rules. This argument failed. Engoron rejected the motion, cited the applicable rules, and found the clerk's donations were lawful.

The Trump family's attorney, Clifford Robert, also cited the @JudicialProtest account in describing the history of the gag order fight.

"The same page routinely posts videos and photographs of, and other media about, the Principal Law Clerk," Robert wrote in an appellate brief on Nov. 15, 2023, referring to Fredin's account. "These posts have garnered millions of views."

Of the nine posts from Fredin's @JudicialProtest account attacking Greenfield, three indicate they reached more than a million impressions. A "verified" user, Fredin routinely tries to amplify their reach by tagging members of Trump's family, his attorneys, and conservative political and media personalities, including the former president's advisor Jason Miller.

Almost immediately after the gag order was temporarily paused on Nov. 16, 2023, Jason Miller shared a link on his X account to the website disseminating Fredin's complaint against Greenfield. A search shows that Miller's account never criticized Greenfield by name before or after the pause of the gag order.

Trump's legal team declined to comment, and Miller referred questions to a spokesperson for the campaign, who did not respond. Fredin did not answer multiple phone calls to the phone number that he listed in court records, and he did not

respond to email inquiries by the time of publication.

New York's Office of Court Administration, the chief administrative body of the state's judiciary, also did not respond when asked if they were aware of Fredin's criminal history or whether he is on the radar of local authorities. Court officials say Trump's attacks on the clerk are putting her in danger. In sworn documents, New York's court security officers said that Engoron and Greenfield received "hundreds" of harassing phone calls and messages, including many with "antisemitic undertones." The court's security division observed spikes in "credible" threats after Trump's attacks on the clerk, which ebbed during the periods when the gag order was in effect and not violated.

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